

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 2-5, 30, 42, 44 and 45, please cancel claims 1, 6-29, 41 and 43, and please add new claims 46-51 as set forth below. Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application, as amended:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) The restraint buckle assembly~~buckle and tongue combination~~ of claim 31, wherein each release ~~abutment member~~ is a release pin.

3. (Currently Amended) A buckle and tongue combination for restraining an occupant in a seat, the buckle and tongue combination comprising:

a housing;

a frame located within the housing;

two pawls disposed upon the frame, each pawl having a distal end and a proximal end, each distal end having a release pin extending from the respective pawl;

a hinge pin disposed at the proximal end of each pawl for pivotally coupling the pawls to the frame;

~~at least one~~ a tongue adapted to be disposed adjacent the two pawls, wherein the tongue interlockingly engages the pawls;

a biasing member disposed within the housing, wherein the biasing member engages ~~engaging~~ the pawls, urging the pawls to a locked position~~position~~ with respect to the adjacent tongue; and

a release button slidably secured along the frame, the release button biased in a first or locked position, the release button having at least one inclined abutment surface which engages the release ~~abutments pins~~ and urges the two pawls towards an unlocked position~~position~~ when the release button is urged toward a second position opposite from the first position, whereby the

user is able to release the tongue from the buckle upon depressing the release button toward the second or unlocked position;

wherein the release button is a molded component having two recesses which open outwardly away from the release pins, wherein the inclined abutment surface is a release wall formed in each of the two recesses, wherein the release pins are received by respective button recesses, and wherein the release wall engages the release pins and urges the two pawls towards the unlocked positionsposition when the release button is urged toward the second position.

4. (Currently Amended) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3, wherein the release wall is spaced apart from the release pins when the pawls are in the locked positionsposition, ~~wherein~~ whereby the spaced apart arrangement allows the release button to be moved ~~in response to a force~~ from the initial locked position up to a point where the release wall comes into contact with the respective release pins, at which time an increased force is required to advance the release button so as to disengage the pawls from the tongue.

5. (Currently Amended) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3, further comprising a tongue separator, ~~and~~ wherein the tongue includes two separate tongues which are adapted to be inserted between the two pawls and on opposite sides of the tongue separator, wherein each pawl has a ledge and each tongue has a ledge, wherein in the locked positionsposition each pawl ledge engages the corresponding tongue ledge to secure the respective tongue within the buckle, wherein the proximal ends of the pawls include a spring retainer, and ~~such that~~ the spring retainers are spaced apart from each other, wherein a pawl spring is located between the spring retainers and urges the pawls into the locked positionsposition, wherein the frame further includes arcuate shaped grooves which receive and are arranged in the path of the release pins, ~~and the frame includes~~ also having two deformed tabs which each form a recess to receive the

corresponding hinge pin, and wherein the release button is biased toward the first position ~~at least in part due to the pawl spring and also by at least in part due to the first and second release button springs.~~

6-29. (Cancelled)

30. (Currently Amended) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 4—3 wherein the biasing member is a first biasing member, and wherein the buckle and tongue combination further comprises a second biasing member that urges the release button toward the first position.

31. (Previously Presented) A restraint buckle assembly comprising:
a frame;

a first pawl pivotally attached to the frame, wherein the first pawl includes a first release member projecting from a first surface of the first pawl;

a second pawl spaced apart from the first pawl and pivotally attached to the frame, wherein the second pawl includes a second release member projecting from a second surface of the second pawl, and wherein the first and second pawls are moveable between locked positions and open positions;

a biasing member operably coupled to the first and second pawls to urge the pawls toward the locked positions; and

a release button slidably coupled to the frame and moveable along a path between a first position and a second position, wherein the release button includes a first recess spaced apart from a second recess, wherein the first recess receives the first release member and the second recess receives the second release member, and wherein the release button urges the first and second pawls from the locked positions toward the open positions when the release button is moved from the first position toward the second position.

32. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31 wherein the biasing member is a first biasing member, and wherein the restraint buckle assembly further comprises a second biasing member that urges the release button along the path toward the first position.

33. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 32 wherein the first recess includes a first wall portion that contacts the first release member, and the second recess includes a second wall portion that contacts the second release member, when the release button is in the first position.

34. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31 wherein each of the first and second recesses includes:

- a stop wall portion that contacts the corresponding release member to at least partially retain the release button in the first position;
- a delay wall portion extending from the stop wall portion in a direction that is at least generally parallel to the path; and
- a release wall portion extending at an angle from the delay wall portion, wherein the release wall portion engages the respective release member to rotate the first and second pawls outwardly toward the open positions when the release button is moved along the path toward the second position.

35. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 34 wherein:
a first force is required to move the release button along the path when the first and second release members are in contact with the delay wall portions; and
a second force, greater than the first force, is required to move the release button along the path when the first and second release members are in contact with the release wall portions.

36. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31 wherein the frame includes a first slot spaced apart from a second slot, wherein the first release member projects into the first slot and the second release member projects into the second slot.

37. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31 wherein the frame further comprises a first opening and a second opening spaced apart from the first opening, and wherein the restraint buckle assembly further comprises a first hinge pin positioned in the first opening to pivotally attach the first pawl to the frame, and a second hinge pin positioned in the second opening to pivotally attach the second pawl to the frame.

38. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31, further comprising:

- a first tongue having a first engagement surface that engages a first ledge surface of the first pawl when the first pawl is in the locked position;
- a second tongue portion separate from the first tongue portion having a second engagement surface that engages a second ledge surface of the second pawl when the second pawl is in the locked position; and
- a tongue separator operably coupled to the frame between the first and second tongue portions when the first and second tongue portions are interlocked with the corresponding first and second pawls.

39. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 31, further comprising:

- a housing at least partially surrounding the frame and the first and second pawls, wherein the housing includes an alignment opening; and
- a tongue configured to be removably inserted into the housing through the alignment opening and engaged with the pawls, wherein the tongue includes

an alignment member protruding from a front side of the tongue corresponding to the alignment opening.

40. (Previously Presented) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 39 wherein the biasing member is a first biasing member, and the assembly further comprises:
a second biasing member operatively coupled to the housing; and
an ejector member slidably coupled to the housing, wherein the ejector member has a first side spaced apart from a second side, wherein the first side is operably coupled to the second biasing member and the second side contacts the alignment member when the tongue is inserted into the housing at least partially biasing the tongue away from the pawls.

41. (Cancelled)

42. (Currently Amended) The restraint buckle assembly of claim ~~41~~45, further comprising:
a housing at least partially surrounding the frame and the first and second pawls;
and
a tongue configured to be removably inserted into the housing, wherein the tongue includes means for engaging each of the first and second pawls.

43. (Cancelled)

44. (Currently Amended) The restraint buckle assembly of claim ~~43~~45 wherein the biasing member is a first biasing member, and wherein the restraint buckle assembly further comprises a second biasing member that urges the release button toward the first position.

45. (Currently Amended) ~~The restraint buckle assembly of claim 43 wherein the frame includes~~ A restraint buckle assembly comprising:

a frame having a first slot and a second slot; and

a first pawl pivotally coupled to the frame, wherein the first pawl includes a first release member projecting from the first pawl, wherein the first release member projects into the first slot; and

a second pawl pivotally coupled to the frame, wherein the second pawl includes a second release member projecting from the second pawl, wherein the second release member projects into the second slot, and wherein the first and second pawls are moveable between locked positions and open positions;

a biasing member operably coupled to the first and second pawls, wherein the biasing member urges the first and second pawls toward the locked positions; and

a release button moveably coupled to the frame between a first position and a second position, wherein the release button includes a first inclined abutment edge and a second inclined abutment edge, wherein the first release member projects adjacent to the first abutment edge and the second release member projects adjacent to the second abutment edge, and wherein the release button urges the first and second release members outwardly and away from each other when the release button is moved from the first position to the second position.

46. (New) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3 wherein the tongue includes a belt receiving slot.

47. (New) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3 wherein the tongue includes two separate tongues configured to be inserted between the two pawls.

48. (New) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3 wherein the tongue includes two separate tongues configured to be inserted between the two pawls, and wherein each of the two tongues includes a corresponding belt receiving slot.

49. (New) The buckle and tongue combination of claim 3 wherein the frame further includes arcuate shaped grooves which receive the release pins.

50. (New) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 45, further comprising:
a housing at least partially surrounding the frame and the first and second pawls;
and
a tongue configured to be removably inserted into the housing, wherein the tongue includes means for engaging the first pawl.

51. (New) The restraint buckle assembly of claim 45, further comprising:
a housing at least partially surrounding the frame and the first and second pawls;
a first tongue configured to be removably inserted into the housing, wherein the first tongue includes means for engaging the first pawl; and
a second tongue configured to be removably inserted into the housing, wherein the second tongue includes means for engaging the second pawl.